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ENG 3704-001: American Literature: 1950-Present

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English 3704: American Literature 1950-Present
Course Policy & Syllabus
ENG 3704 – TR – 9:30-10:45pm – 3150 Coleman Hall

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Ames
Office: 3821 Coleman Hall
Office Hours: T: 11-12; 1-2
R: 11-12; 1-2; 3:30-4:30
Or by Appointment
Email: mames@eiu.edu

Course Description: Time is one of the most fundamental parameters through which narratives are organized and understood. Because this age is one of unprecedented flourishing for alternative ways of understanding and inhabiting time, it is not surprising that the cultural narratives of the last half century have been obsessed with time itself. Non-linearity, or temporal distortion, is one of the most common features of modern and postmodern fiction. This course focuses on the temporal play found within various postmodern novels, reading this stylistic device as a way of dealing aesthetically with an altered culture of time. The class will discuss how certain technological inventions, media influences, and national tragedies may have contributed to these new conceptions of temporality.

Course Objectives: After the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Read fiction and nonfiction, expressing a wide range of cultural perspectives and values, and develop abilities to think critically and write analytically about them.
2. Engage in reading and writing experiences about literature in order to demonstrate an increased understanding or an appreciation for social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic ideas and their discovery.
3. Develop research skill, including effective use of source materials and the principles of documentation, and apply that skill to the study of literature and media analysis.
4. Understand the relationship that narratives have to one another (despite differences in media or genre) and to the cultural/social/historical time period in which they are created, produced, and consumed.
5. Apply knowledge about modernism and postmodernism (in terms of both historic events and cultural production) to the analysis of texts from those eras.
6. Study stylistic trends in narrative texts and form arguments for their popularity and effect on consumers.
7. Analyze thematic variations across media and genre in order to determine the effects of narrative format.
8. Apply research from outside disciplines (e.g. political science, history, art) to the study of literature, film, television, and other artifacts from popular culture.
9. Work collaboratively in order to explore ideas, formulate arguments, and present findings in a scholarly fashion.

Required Texts:

Alvarez, Julia. *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents*. NY: Penguin, 2005. Print.
Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. NY: Nascorp, 2004. Print.
Doctorow, E.L. *The Book of Daniel*. NY: Random House, 2007. Print.
Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. NY: Random House, 1964. Print.
Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005. Print.
Morrison, Toni. *Jazz*. NY: Random House, 1992. Print.
Piercy, Marge. *Woman on the Edge of Time*. NY: Fawcett, 1985. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. NY: Random House, 1999. Print.

[Note: Additional Readings Will Also Be Available Through Desire2Learn – noted on syllabus as (D2L)]

Materials: Writing instruments, paper, a storage system for returned work and supplementary materials (three-ring binders work well), two-pocket folders for submitted work, USB-compatible device for saving documents (i.e. a jump drive), a college dictionary (print or electronic), access to word processing (typewriter or computer), and other appropriate supplies.

Course Requirements: This course consists of in-class writing activities, discussion of assigned readings, peer review sessions, out-of-class writing assignments of varying lengths, collaborative group work, and possible pop quizzes. Your grade will be based on a point system that factors in all scores you earn on all writing assignments and in-class work/participation. Attendance is mandatory and will be factored into your in-class grade. Active and constructive class participation will make a positive impact on your overall grade. Detailed assignment instructions and scoring rubrics will accompany all major assignments as the course progresses.

In-Class Work/Participation (200pts):

Daily work – includes in-class activities, writing, peer response, informal group work, and oral presentations.

Response Pieces – includes short formal or informal written responses to the required reading, the media critiques, and class discussion/debates.

Participation – **includes attendance**, participation in class activities, and course preparation. Points may be deducted due to tardiness/early departure, lack of participation, failure to bring texts and other needed materials to class, and/or behavior that distracts from class activities.

Formal Writing Assignments/Assessments/Projects (800pts):

Response Journal: An ongoing project that documents careful reading and literary analysis, as well as the attentive viewing of in-class films. This collection of essays and notations will assist students in completing other course work. (200pts)

Midterm Analysis Essay: A close-reading of one literary text from the first half of the semester. (100pts)

Final Synthesis Essay & Presentation: A comprehensive analysis applying scholarly research to a contemporary text (or textual set). This essay will be condensed into a PechaKucha presentation and shared during class panel discussions. (200pts)

Group Research Project/Discussion Leadership: A collaborative group project studying an assigned novel. This project will require out of class meetings, research compilation, and a formal group presentation. (100pts)

Midterm Exam: An in-class exam including the interpretation and identification of key literary passages & quotes, short response questions concerning the literary works & media narratives, and reflective responses that showcase an understanding of the course focus areas (thematic analysis, stylistic trends, genre study, and application of research). (100pts)

Final Exam: An essay exam focusing on the course study of textual stylistics (and differences related to genre, media, and audience). Students will be expected to discuss the major narratives (print and media) covered during the semester as they relate to the course focus. (100pts)

Course Grade: Your grade in this course will be calculated using a straight point system and standard grading scale. Your final grade will be determined by the following breakdown and grading scale:

Formal Writing Assignments/Essays:	800 pts
In-Class Work/Participation:	200 pts
Total Points Possible:	1000pts

A = 90% -100%	C = 70% - 79%	F = 0% - 59%
B = 80% - 89%	D = 60% - 69%	

Instructor Class Policies:

Submitted Assignments: All documents must be submitted on time and have a professional appearance. Every assignment should be typed on white, 8.5 x 11 paper and formatted according to MLA guidelines and standards when applicable. (If you are unfamiliar with MLA 2009 guidelines please utilize Purdue's Online Writing Lab at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>). When writing assignments are turned in they will be submitted in a two-pocket folder that holds all pre-writing, outlines, drafts, and peer review comments. For your own protection, keep copies of all completed work.

Assignment Due Dates: **LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF ZERO (0).** Assignments, including drafts, are due at the beginning of class. E-mail attachments will not be accepted as substitutes for hard copies of your work. Computer and printer problems are not an excuse for turning in late work, so draft and print well in advance.

In-Class Work: In-class activities must be completed in the class period they are assigned. No make-ups will be given on any of these activities unless arrangements have been made with the instructor in advance.

Class Attendance: Because this course is discussion heavy and emphasizes writing as process and as collaborative activity, attendance is essential. During the projects, your classmates will rely on your feedback. Class exercises, peer responses, and group work cannot be made up and their lack of completion will negatively affect your in-class work/participation grade. Therefore, absences negatively affect your grade. For an absence to be excused it must be considered a legitimate and verifiable emergency and documentation must be provided. Legitimate and verifiable emergencies include those instances for which you can provide documentation for why you had to miss class. Acceptable documents include accident reports, doctors' notes, hospital forms, and employer notices. Although these documents will be accepted, any pattern of documented absences will be questioned and addressed. If it is an excused absence, attending a pre-approved workshop or lecture appropriate to the course description, you can make up the time but not the work missed. Perfect attendance merits the addition of 25 extra-credit points to the in-class work/participation category.

Proper Documentation of Emergency: Assignments may only be turned in late if the student provides documentation of an emergency that prevented him/her from attending class. Proper documentation must be an original document (no photocopies), containing the student's name, and cover the date(s) in question, and be signed by a professional (i.e. doctor). An email is not proper documentation.

Presentations: Please be present when you are scheduled to give a presentation. **If you miss class on the day of a scheduled presentation and your absence is undocumented you will receive a zero and will not be able to make up the presentation.**

Plagiarism: In accordance with English Department and University policies, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism – the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author represented as one's own - has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty up to an including immediate assignment of the grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office." The best argument against plagiarism is that you cheat yourself out of the education you are here to obtain when you copy someone else's work. If you believe that a specific instance in your writing might constitute plagiarism, please consult me prior to turning in the final draft.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services.

English 3704 Course Schedule

Unit I. Textual Predecessors: Temporal Play in the Modernist Era

Week #1

T 8/20 – Course Introduction & Overview

R 8/22 – Analyzing Experimental Stylistics in Modernist Fiction

Prepared Reading: “Benjamin Button,” Fitzgerald (D2L)

Week #2

T 8/27 – The American Expatriate Writers & their Contemporaries / Viewing of *The Hours*

Prepared Reading: Begin *The Sound & the Fury*, Faulkner (Section I); “Composition as Explanation”, Stein (<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/essay/238702>), Online Synopsis of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*

R 8/29 – Print & Film Literary Adaptations / Viewing of *The Hours*

Prepared Reading: Continue *The Sound & The Fury* (Section II)

Week #3

T 9/3 – Point of View & Time Shifts / Discuss *The Sound & The Fury*

Prepared Reading: Finish *The Sound & The Fury* (Sections III & IV)

R 9/5 – Exploring Narrative Repetition on the Page & Screen

Prepared Reading: “A Little Something for us Tempunauts,” Dick (D2L), Begin *Jazz*, Morrison (chs 1-6)

Unit II. Identity (De)Construction in Non-Linear Postmodern Narratives

Week #4

T 9/10 – Musicality & Temporality / Discussion of *Jazz*

Prepared Reading: Finish *Jazz* (chs 7-15)

R 9/12 – The Theme of Malleable Memory / Viewing of *Mulholland Drive*

Prepared Reading: Begin reading *Kindred*, Butler (Prologue - The Fall)

Week #5

T 9/17 – Constructed Time(s) / Viewing of *Mulholland Drive* / Discuss “The Elevator”

Prepared Reading: “The Elevator,” Coover (D2L); Continue reading *Kindred* (The Fight)

R 9/19 – Time Travel & Science Fiction / Discuss *Kindred*

Prepared Reading: Finish *Kindred* (The Storm - Epilogue)

Week #6

T 9/24 – Multiple Futures / The Endless Possibilities Found in Fictional Narratives

Prepared Reading: “Garden of Forking Paths,” Borges (D2L); Begin Reading *Garcia Girls*, Alvarez (Parts I & II)

R 9/26 – Reverse Chronological Order / Discussion of *Garcia Girls*

Prepared Reading: Finish *Garcia Girls* (Part III)

English 3704: American Literature & Culture Post-1950
Adjusted Syllabus/Schedule for 2nd Half of Semester

Week #7

T 10/1 – Peer Editing Session for Midterm Analysis Essay / Choose Your Own Adventure Narratives

Prepared Reading: *Cave of Time*, Packard (D2L); “How,” Moore (D2L)

R 10/3 – Review for Midterm / Film Viewing of *Memento*

Assignment Due: Midterm Analysis Essay

Week #8

T 10/8 – Time & Perception / Film Viewing of *Memento*

Prepared Reading: Begin *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Piercy (Chapters 1-4)

R 10/10 – Midterm Exam

Prepared Reading: Continue *Woman on the Edge* (Chapters 5-8)

Unit III. Temporality & Trauma Theory: Historicizing Narrative Trends

Week #9:

T 10/15 – Scientific Possibilities of Time Travel / Film Viewing of *The Butterfly Effect*

Prepared Reading: Continue *Woman on the Edge* (Chapters 9-12)

R 10/17 – Moral Responsibility in Time Travel Narratives / Viewing of *Butterfly Effect*

Prepared Reading: Continue *Woman on the Edge* (Chapters 13-16)

Week #10

T 10/22 – Psychology & Time / Discuss *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Prepared Reading: Finish *Woman on the Edge* (Chapters 17-20)

R 10/24 – The Search for “Truth” in Time Narratives / Viewing of *Twelve Monkeys*

Prepared Reading: Begin Reading *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut (Chapters 1-4)

Week #11

T 10/29 – The Motif of Time in Postapocalyptic Narratives / Film Viewing of *Twelve Monkeys*

Prepared Reading: Continue *Slaughterhouse* (Chapters 5-7)

R 10/31 – WWII, Trauma, & Time / Discuss *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Prepared Reading: Finish *Slaughterhouse* (Chapters 8-10)

Week #12

T 11/5 – Real Time Narratives / Analyzing Fox’s *24*

Prepared Reading: Begin Reading *Extremely Loud*, Foer (Chapters 1-4)

R 11/7 – Workshop/Research Day for Final Essay – NO CLASS

Begin Reading *Extremely Loud*, Foer (Chapters 5-8)

Unit IV. Analyzing a Universal Theme: The “Do-Over” Motif Across Time & Genre

Week #13

T 11/12 – Time Travel on TV/ NBC’s *Heroes*

Prepared Reading: Continue Reading *Extremely Loud* (Chapters 9-13)

R 11/14 – Post-9/11, Trauma, & Time / Discussion of *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*

Prepared Reading: Finish Reading *Extremely Loud* (Chapters 14-17)

Assignment Due: Response Journal

Week #14

T 11/19 –Temporal Play on the Small Screen – ABC’s *Lost* / Peer Edit

R 11/21–The Popularity of The “Do Over” / Alternate Universe Theme in Film

Assignment Due: Synthesis Essay (submitted electronically to mames@eiu.edu)

T 11/26 – No Class – Thanksgiving Break

R 11/28 – No Class – Thanksgiving Break

Week #15

T 12/3 – PechaKucha Panel Presentations

R 12/5 – PechaKucha Panel Presentations

Final Exam Week / End of Semester